

Fidelity Title leaving South Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Fidelity National Title in South Lake Tahoe is closing at the end of business today.

“The amount of transactions in this marketplace have diminished so it doesn’t make it feasible to have an office here,” Lenora Shealy, vice president and escrow administrator for the company’s Sacramento Valley region, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Two full time and one part time employee will be without jobs.

Fidelity had been in South Lake Tahoe for more than a quarter century.

The next closest offices are in El Dorado Hills, Tahoe City and Truckee.

Shealy said Fidelity is working with agents and lenders to transfer files “so customers are taken care of.”

MontBleu’s parent company emerging from bankruptcy

By Arnold M. Knightly, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Billionaire financier Carl Icahn will be the largest owner of Tropicana Entertainment when it becomes the first gaming company to emerge from bankruptcy since the recession, likely

on Jan. 27.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board gave preliminary approval Wednesday to the Las Vegas-based gaming company's new ownership and financial structure plans.

If approved, Tropicana Entertainment would own nine casinos in five states including the River Palms and the Tropicana in Laughlin, and the MontBleu in Lake Tahoe once it exits bankruptcy.

Read the whole story

Potential buyer wants to turn Bill's into strip club

By Kathryn Reed

A strip club. That's what Bill's Casino may become.

Potential proprietor Mike Laub and Douglas County Sheriff Ron Pierini met Monday to discuss the idea. The sheriff's department issues alcohol and adult entertainment licenses. But it's the county commissioners who first must approve the licenses.

When Laub tried to open a strip club a few years ago at the bottom of Kingsbury Grade in the old Faces and Tahoe Underground building, the commission denied him.



Bill's may become a strip club.

The commissioners then rewrote the ordinance dictating where these types of businesses are allowed. The only place on the South Shore of Douglas County a strip club is allowed is along the casino corridor “ right where Laub wants his club.

Not even Las Vegas has strip clubs on its Strip.

Laub did not return phone calls. He is an attorney on the South Shore. He used to own Brothers Bar on Emerald Bay Road.

Pierini told *Lake Tahoe News* that Laub is thinking about buying the two-story building from Harrah’s Entertainment to have part of it be a strip club and part shops.

This can be a busy area with families walking by. Across the street is a movie theater at the Horizon. Restaurants and showrooms in the adjacent and nearby casinos all cater to children.

“They wanted to see what the pleasure of the county would be because of the investment possibility,” Pierini said.

Laub essentially wants the OK from the county to do this before he makes a deal with Harrah’s, otherwise he could end up owning a building without a business to operate.

Douglas County Commission Chairwoman Nancy McDermid did not want to discuss the matter at this time.

The commission would need more than public outcry as a reason

to deny the permit. However, entertainment licenses are hard to get. All employees have to have work cards and have background checks, plus other requirements.

Pierini believes Laub and the district attorney need to talk about Laub's business proposal.

"The only opinion I will give, and I told Mr. Laub this, is I won't give my personal opinion, but I can say it will increase calls of service," Pierini said.

Pierini was captain at the Tahoe substation when a strip club was in the old Nugget building in the 1990s. It has since been subdivided and houses restaurants and other businesses east of the casino corridor.

That club didn't last long.

"Typically when you deal with strip clubs the problem is intoxication and disturbance of the peace with fights," Pierini said.

John Packer, spokesman for Harrah's Northern Nevada, said the company doesn't expect to decide until later this month or February whether to sell or lease the property.

"The only decision that was made was to close Bill's on Jan. 4," Packer said.

But he added, "Harrah's is not in the real estate business."

Harrah's is in the gaming business. It owns Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline.

Packer would not comment on how a strip club might affect his business.

Others are more vocal about their thoughts.

"I think the location is not appropriate for it," Carol

Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, said. “I would hope that is not the direction that our destination aspires to.”

Although the strip club would be across the state line, the South Shore tries to be one community.

“When we say “America’s All-Year Playground,” that is not what we had in mind,” South Lake Tahoe Mayor Kathay Lovell said.

SLT spending state money on parking study

By Kathryn Reed



South Lake Tahoe is spending more money on yet another study.

The nearly \$45,000 for the parking study comes from state Community Development Block Grant and Planning & Technical Assistance Grant funds.

“The goal of the study is to develop parking solutions which could improve economic conditions in the community,” Nancy Kerry, the city’s Redevelopment & Housing manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The idea behind these grants are to find solutions to barriers to economic development. For example, if parking problems are impediments to businesses and job

retention (in areas like) Ski Run Boulevard/Harrison Avenue, etc., then what solutions would improve the situation that will help to grow the local businesses, make it easier for customers to access those businesses, thus bringing in new customers, growing their revenue and retaining jobs.”

Developers in the Lake Tahoe Basin are mandated to follow parking regulations set forth by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

The original theory was if less ground were covered with asphalt for parking, this would encourage people to use public transit (on a system that keeps changing its schedule), walk (on sidewalks that don't exist) or ride their bikes (in traffic because bike lanes are sketchy).

The reality is locals and tourists like their cars and adequate parking is not available at many places. Ski Run Marina is a prime example of this. This is because instead allowing for the number of spaces to meet the needs of the center, the rules care more about vehicle miles traveled and not the reality of the consumer.

Although the money is coming from the state, it's still taxpayer money. One has to wonder if a parking study is really needed. Why can't the city, TRPA, business owners and consumers find the answer sooner and without expense?

The request for proposal (RFP) was sent out Jan. 6.

2 arrests in CVS robbery at

South Tahoe

Two South Lake Tahoe men have been arrested for allegedly robbing the CVS Pharmacy on Emerald Bay Road on Dec. 27 and for a Dec. 16 residential robbery near the state line.

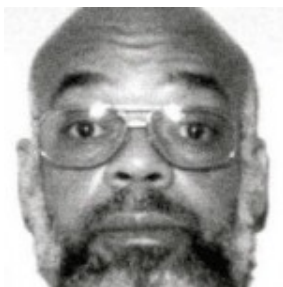
Kyle Shannon and Stuart Miller, both 22, were booked into the El Dorado County Jail in South Lake Tahoe on multiple robbery charges.

Emotionless father sentenced for killing 4-year-old son

By Kathryn Reed

A two-hour sentencing hearing may have seemed long for the more than 50 people in the courtroom, but for those who had to wait 24 years to hear a judge say Ulysses Roberson would spend 15 years to life in prison, it was time well spent Wednesday afternoon.

Roberson, who last month was convicted of second-degree murder in the death of his son, continued to express his innocence.



Ulysses
Roberson

Dressed in an orange jumpsuit, he showed no remorse, nor exhibited any with his words as he denied killing 4-year-old Alexander Olive. The boy's body has never been found.

"He showed his true colors today by not accepting any responsibility or exhibiting any emotion," FBI agent Chris Campion said of Roberson. "You don't meet too many sociopaths. He is one of them."

When both sides had their say, El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury said all the adults in the boy's life had failed him.

Roberson lived with several women in the Tahoe Keys neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe. The boy is believed to have been killed in December 1985 or January 1986.

Judy Olive, the boy's mother, forgave Roberson at Wednesday's sentencing, just like she had done on the witness stand. However, she chose not to be in the courtroom when Roberson spoke.

Roberson asked to be able to leave when Olive gave her PowerPoint presentation, but the judge denied that request.

Olive showed slides of her life, the family members her son never met, the few pictures she has from his short life.

A hearing is scheduled for Jan. 15 to determine how much credit for time served Roberson will have taken off his sentence. The state Department of Corrections will decide where he will be imprisoned.

Lakes near Tahoe to be inspected for mussels

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

The hunt for invading mussels that could pose an ecological disaster for the region will extend beyond Lake Tahoe to other threatened lakes and reservoirs.

Donner and Independence lakes and Boca, Stampede and Prosser Creek reservoirs will be searched for the possible presence of quagga or zebra mussels. Boats launching into these water bodies could soon be inspected to ensure mussels are not attached to their hulls.

Read the whole story

Decision on Bijou post office expected in 3 weeks



By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe post office officials expect to know by the end of the month if the Bijou facility will be closed.

Postmaster Toni Passot told *Lake Tahoe News* on Jan. 5 that no decision has been made yet.

Some of the confusion with the more than 900 people who rent a

box at the facility may be that they cannot renew their box for more than six months. Passot said based on how the U.S. Postal Service issues refunds, it's better for patrons not to rent longer than six months at Bijou right now.

The lease on the building expires in the summer. If the decision is made to close the office, summer is when it would likely occur. The reason to close would be to save money.

"We can accommodate them in other facilities," Passot said. The main post office is one mile away, plus there is an office in Meyers and one at the Y. Or people could get mail delivered to their house.

In the last several years, the Tahoe Keys, Stateline area and Black Bart neighborhood locations that just had boxes, and no office per se, have also closed.

"We had as many boxes as the city of Reno at one time," Passot said. "But we didn't have home mail delivery then."

There was a time when there was a waiting list for a post office box in South Lake Tahoe. Without home delivery, people were on General Delivery – meaning they had to get their mail from a clerk during business hours.

Number of homes sold in Tahoe on the upswing



By Kathryn Reed

More houses were sold in Lake Tahoe in 2009 than in 2008, but the prices kept falling.

Foreclosure listings are still happening on a regular basis as people struggle to make ends meet in this economically depressed region.

According to Chase International, sales were up 22 percent throughout the basin. It breaks down to increases of 22 percent on the South Shore, 38 percent in Tahoe City, 17 percent on the East Shore, and 4 percent in Incline. In Truckee, sales jumped 23 percent.

“We are definitely seeing signs that home prices may be reaching the bottom. Some of the home prices we saw in 2009 were equivalent to prices a decade ago, and buyers have taken advantage of these discounts by snapping up some of these great properties, thereby limiting available inventory,” Sue Lowe, Chase vice president, said in a press release. “Now that the word is out about the amazing values to be had in the Reno-Tahoe area, we anticipate pricing will level off as even more buyers enter the market.”

Lowe is always optimistic with her prepared statements.

The 2009, Reno single-family home sales were up 41 percent.

Condominium sales are all over the board: East Shore up 69 percent, Tahoe City up 47 percent, Incline Village up 8 percent, South Shore down 27 percent., Reno up 59 percent.

Charter to sell billions in

stock

Sacramento Business Journal

Charter Communications Inc., which emerged from bankruptcy in November, plans to sell nearly 78 million shares of stock worth up to \$2.7 billion.

The proposed maximum offering price is \$34.50 a share, according to a filing Thursday with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Read the whole story